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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, November 19, 1943

*serve*  
*ph* A ONE-WAY TICKET FOR FOOD. Information from food distribution officials  
of U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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During wartime we frown on non-essential travel, but there's one offender in practically every home who's doing a lot of unnecessary traveling around. That offender is food. Of course food must travel from the farms and gardens and orchards to the fighting fronts, and to the stores in each home community. But after it gets into our homes, all too often food makes a round trip from the kitchen to the table--and right back to the kitchen again. And the end of that unpatriotic journey is the garbage pail.

If you shopped for a family of four last year, you bought, on the average, sixteen pounds of food a day--and threw away two and a half pounds. In other words, over a week's time you threw away enough food to feed your family an extra day.

American farmers and gardeners are planning to work extra hard next year, in order to top this year's record food crop by five percent. But our homemakers could probably add as much to the nation's food supply, simply by using up every bit of edible food that comes into their kitchens.

Of the food we waste at home, about one-fourth is green vegetables...over one-fourth is other vegetables...over one-fourth is fruit...and about one-seventh is baked goods.

Why does all this food get thrown away? Sometimes, because of wastefulness in preparing the fruit and vegetables for cooking...sometimes it's failure to use fresh foods before they spoil...sometimes it's because of ignorance that the parts thrown away are actually edible. But all too large a part comes right from the table--from food left on the plates...and from left-

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overs that were forgotten and left in the refrigerator too long.

Your family may leave food on their plates because it doesn't look good... or because servings were too large. Perhaps they're tired of a certain dish. And often food is left because it just wasn't cooked or prepared right. Hot food may come to the table cold. Vegetables may be overcooked and mushy. Sometimes the biscuits don't rise. It's no wonder that kind of food makes the trip away from the table.

One woman made a little investigation in her own community to find out why certain foods got the cold shoulder in some homes. One of the foods she asked about was spinach. Of almost three hundred men she questioned, three-fourths said they didn't like spinach--because, according to them, it was gritty, or stringy, or strong-tasting. Of course spinach isn't any of those things, when it's prepared right. So it was no credit to most of the homemakers of that community that their husbands found spinach a disagreeable food.

When you prepare food in a haphazard manner, you're giving it a ticket to the garbage pail. On the other hand, food that looks attractive, and tastes good, isn't likely to do any non-essential traveling away from the table.

Vegetables and fruits should be cooked as short a time as possible, and barely covered with water. Overcooking, and too much water, make them mushy and unattractive, besides destroying food value. Cook green vegetables uncovered to keep the color. White vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, cabbage, and onions, turn gray when you overcook them, or when they have to wait around after being cooked.

Eggs, cheese, and meat--the protein foods--need slow cooking at low temperatures to keep them tender. High temperatures make them tough.

Sometimes just a taste of scorched food will be enough to make your family dislike that food for a long time. Milk, especially, needs care to prevent scorching. A double boiler for hot milk drinks, cream sauce, and other milk

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dishes, will help avoid scorching.

Seasonings are intended to bring out the natural flavor of food, so use them with a sparing hand. Don't ruin foods by over-seasoning them.

It may be fun at times to work a few variations in a recipe, but there's always a chance of spoiling good materials. Use tested recipes, and follow them exactly. Keep in mind that they are scientifically worked out to give you the best results from your materials. And they help you avoid waste by controlling the number of servings.

But even the most reliable recipe isn't proof against the cook who uses a pinch of this and a handful of that, and measures with a coffee cup and a dessert spoon. Standard measuring cups and spoons are inexpensive, and repay their own cost many times over in cooking results. Of course measurements in standard recipes are level. "Scant" teaspoons and "heaped" cups will never give you the same results twice in succession.

Food ruined by poor preparation represents a total loss: loss of your own time and materials...loss of manhours of the grower...loss of soil fertility, machinery, and farm materials...loss of transportation facilities...loss of manhours for the people who sold the food.

So--every homemaker has a part to play in making food fight for freedom. No doubt you have heard the food slogan that is being emphasized this month: "Produce and Conserve---Share and Play Square." Some of us cannot produce food. But each of us can certainly help to conserve it---and play square with it.

If you want some ideas on making full use of every bit of food that comes into your home, perhaps you'd like a copy of the leaflet called "Fight Food Waste in the Home." It's free--just write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Washington 25, D. C. The name of the leaflet, again, is "Fight Food Waste in the Home."

